

Scand 340: Kalevala
Keywords - 11/4/10

Allegory: “Description of a subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance” (OED). An allegory is a story (or poem or play) which retells or comments on a second story, giving special emphasis to particular elements in the second story. Allegory can be understood as a literary text with a second meaning. In pre-modern Finnish society, Christian allegories were common. Folk singers often sang songs which included stories, which were metaphorically retellings of Christian doctrine. We see such an allegory in Poem 50 of *Kalevala*. Marjatta, for example, is made equivalent to Mary by way of the symbol of virgin birth. Previously, we have interpreted other poems in the *Kalevala* as allegory, for example, poem 16-17 we argued were allegories of a shamanistic duel.

History: Since its earliest uses during classical antiquity, history has meant a narrative account of events. Since the nineteenth century, when the idea of modern history arose, history has also carried the sense of an authoritative account of event. Its authority rests on the idea that historical narrative is produced through research. In its contemporary usage, history tends to designate an “organized knowledge of the past,” as Raymond Williams puts it (*Keywords*, 148). What provides the organization and the knowledge? One can say that these features come from history’s correlation with certain ‘laws’ of development. An example would be the idea that history is shaped by conflicts between different classes in society, as Marx argues. Alternatively, one can see a lack of historical necessity or law. The history of nations has often been important in shaping events, yet as a narrative of events, national histories must also exclude events, usually deemed unimportant. But often these omissions can be seen as advantageous to the ruling classes. In this sense, history can be seen as part of social struggles and conflict. The conclusion of the *Kalevala* designates the commencement of Finnish history by symbolically organizing the relationship of two events, the end of pagan folk culture and the beginning of the Christian era.